



King County

Department of Executive Services
Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division

Animal Services and Programs Section

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October 22, 2003

Northwest Animal Rights Network
1704 East Galer
Seattle, WA 98112

Sent by e-mail via info@narn.org with hard copy to follow.

Dear NARN:

We have received a number of messages following a recent NARN weekly e-mail regarding a proposed ordinance amending King County Code Title 11 (animal control regulations) and Title 21A (small animal regulations in the zoning code). In order to help assure that persons have current information about the changes being proposed, I would like to share the following.

1. NARN announced that hobby kennel license changes in the proposed ordinance would allow “unrestricted” numbers of unaltered animals.

This is not correct. Persons would not be permitted to have unrestricted numbers of unaltered pets, because either the numbers of pets specified in the zoning code, or the numbers of pets specified in the hobby kennel license, would establish the maximum.

Currently, there are language conflicts between Title 21A and Title 11, which has created some ambiguity regarding the numbers of allowable unaltered pets in the County. Some persons may interpret the Code as currently limiting the number of unaltered pets to a maximum of three. As a result, this has led some persons to believe (and as reported by NARN) that having more than three unaltered pets with a hobby kennel license represents a change. However, our interpretation of the Code, and current enforcement practices, currently allows more than three unaltered pets with a hobby kennel license. The proposed ordinance will continue this existing practice (although with clearer language that eliminates the ambiguity) and does not suggest “unrestricted” numbers of unaltered pets.

2. NARN announced that “unlimited pet breeding” was under consideration.

This is not correct. Currently, the hobby kennel license sets breeding limits, and the proposed ordinance would further reduce the level of breeding allowed.

3. Other information and background

The primary purpose of the proposed ordinance is to ensure consistency between these two sections of the King County Code (Title 21A and Title 11) regarding the keeping of dogs, cats and other small animals. The proposed ordinance eliminates conflicting language and resolves ambiguous regulatory wording. (In addition, the proposed ordinance also updates enforcement procedures as well as makes a number of housekeeping changes to clarify and update language.)

NARN
October 22, 2003
Page Two

Currently, a hobby kennel license is required to maintain four or more pets (altered or not) in unincorporated King County, up to the limits in the zoning code. (Some contracting cities have also adopted hobby kennel license provisions.) As a result of public input, the proposed ordinance recommends a change to the hobby kennel requirements, as follows: the hobby kennel license would be required only in two situations: first, when the numbers of dogs and/or cats in the zoning code is exceeded, or second, when the owner maintains four or more unaltered animals. This proposed change means that pet owners who have four or more pets, with no more than three of them unaltered, would no longer be required to obtain a hobby kennel license (as long as they remain within the limits established in the zoning code.)

The proposed ordinance's reduction of the use of a hobby kennel license only to properties where there are four or more unaltered pets, or when the zoning code limits are exceeded, is integrally linked with two other changes. These two changes address situations no longer covered by the hobby kennel license.

First, a new definition and requirement for "humane treatment" of animals is proposed to Title 11. This would address the importance of maintaining animals "in a safe and sanitary manner" and providing them with "adequate food, water, shelter, waste removal, veterinary care and exercise appropriate for its characteristics including species and breed." Second, additional language is proposed to clarify that Notice and Orders may be used to abate violations that have previously been corrected through the hobby kennel license, through measures such as fencing, soundproofing, or conditions to ensure that animals are provided with humane treatment.

The complete text of the proposed ordinance and other explanatory information is posted on the County's website at <http://www.metrokc.gov/lars/animal/index.htm>

If you have any questions, my e-mail address is ben.leifer@metrokc.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Leifer
Manager, Animal Services and Programs

cc: Dean Logan, Director, Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division